



TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Safe & Supportive Schools

6th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Annual Alternative Education Report (School Year 2011-2012)

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Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education

March 2013

Printable report also available on our website at:
<http://state.tn.us/education/learningsupport/alted.shtml>

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Survey Results/Findings	3
Alternative School Spotlight.....	5
Appendices.....	7
Annual Alternative Education Survey SY 2008-2009.....	Appendix A
District Alternative Education Coordinators.....	Appendix B
Sample Comments from LEAs.....	Appendix C
History of Alternative Education in Tennessee.....	Appendix D

Annual Alternative Education Report (2011-2012 School Year)

Introduction

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404 requires that at least one alternative school or program be established for districts serving students in grades seven through twelve and also allows LEAs to create alternative schools or programs for grades one through six. Additionally, *Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404* provides that the Advisory Council make an annual report to the Governor, the General Assembly, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education on the status of alternative education in Tennessee. The report presented herewith meets the legislative requirement set forth.

To obtain the needed data, the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education, in conjunction with the Department of Education, developed the *2011-2012 Annual Alternative Education Survey*. A copy of the survey has been included as Appendix A. When reporting on alternative education, districts used the definition supplied by the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education which states "**A nontraditional academic program or school designed to meet the student's educational, behavioral, and social needs.**" Operating under this definition, districts reported on various aspects of their alternative education programming. Information presented in this report summarizes surveys provided by Tennessee school districts.

In addition to collecting data on current programming at the local level, districts were also asked a series of questions related to their current needs in the field. Those major findings have also been included in this report. Additionally, the reader will find a historical background of alternative education in Tennessee, current trends in the field, and stories of success.

Questions regarding this report may be directed to Lori Paisley, Executive Secretary for the Advisory Council. Ms. Paisley may be reached by phone at (615) 532-4774 or via email to Lori.Paisley@tn.gov.

Survey Results/Findings

The annual alternative education survey was distributed to all Tennessee school districts and has been included as Appendix A. The survey to districts required each LEA to identify an alternative education coordinator, thereby providing a framework for networking, collaboration, training, and technical assistance. To review the designee for every Tennessee district please visit Appendix B. Based upon the responses from districts, findings indicate that there are (221) alternative schools and/or programs. This translates to (659) classrooms solely dedicated to providing alternative education services. The total number served in an alternative setting last school year was

(17,465) students. Districts have (23,567) seats in an alternative school or program, indicating that some placements are less than one school year.

On the survey, districts were also asked to distinguish between the various types of professionals providing services to students in the alternative school or program. Statewide, there were (798) certified teachers serving students. Of those certified teachers, (104) were certified special education teachers, and (43) were certified ELL teachers. School counselors are also working with alternative education students (86 statewide). Other groups providing alternative education services include (386) non-certified staff in which (84) were education assistants, (81) were school resource officers (SROs), and (60) were social workers. For a summary of those findings please see Table 1.

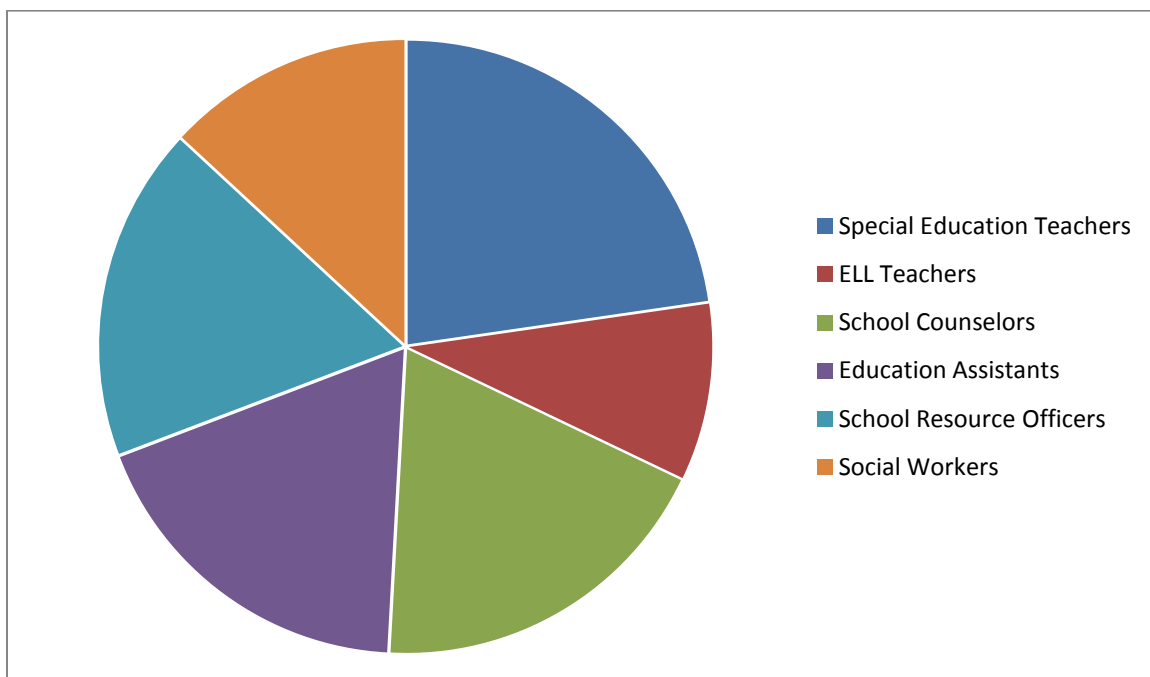


Table 1: Professionals Serving Students in an Alternative Setting

Districts were asked to rate the primary reason for student participation in the alternative school or program. The number one reason for attendance was a culmination of *disruptive behavior(s)* (66 percent). The second most cited reason was for committing a *zero tolerance offense* (22 percent). The *need for an alternative education strategy* was also noted by districts (10 percent). Finally, districts noted *other circumstances warranting participation* (2 percent). Table 2 summarizes those findings.

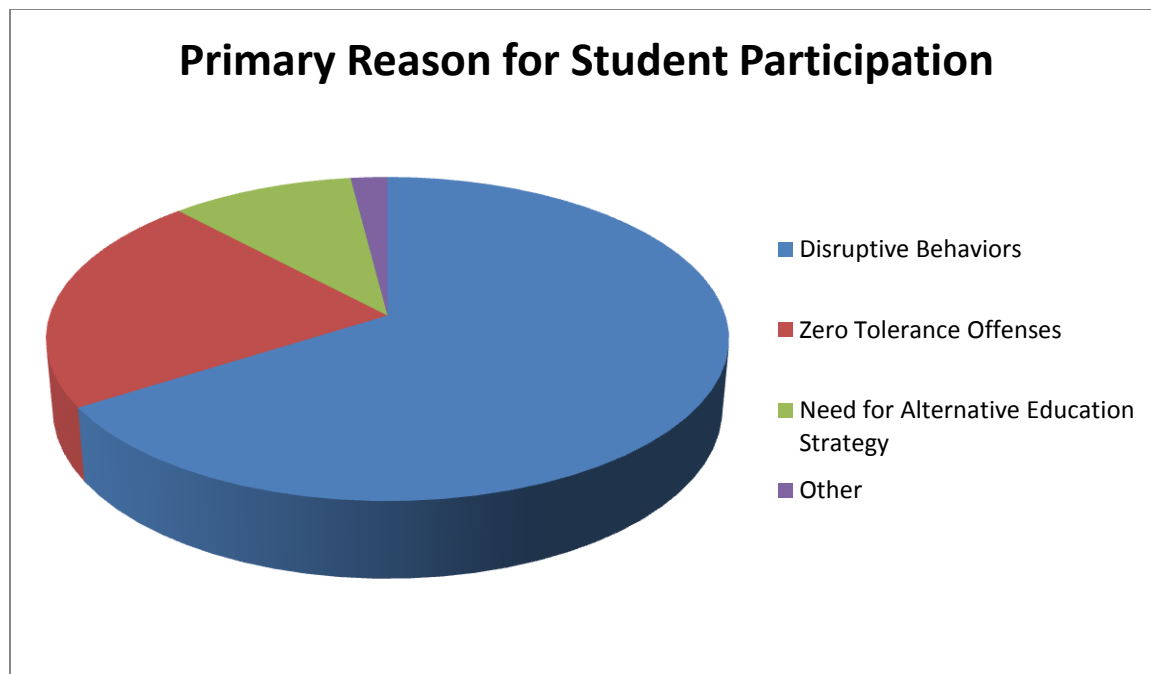


Table 2: Primary Reason for Student Participation

LEAs were also asked to indicate the type of services offered in the alternative school or program. The most prevalent programming/services include the following: Individual Behavior Plans (100 reporting), Technology-based Instruction (94 reporting), Transition Services (91 reporting), Character Education (91 reporting), Individual and/or Family Counseling (90 reporting), Individual Learner Plans (89 reporting), Use of Level System Appropriate Behavior (84 reporting) and Life Skills (79 reporting). Less frequently cited/offered include the following: Student Drug Testing (47 reporting), Service Learning (54 reporting), Distance Learning (59 reporting), Screening Committee (67 reporting), Mental Health Partnership (68 reporting), Extended Day Programming (71 reporting), and Juvenile Court Partnership (74 reporting). Table 3 summarizes those findings.

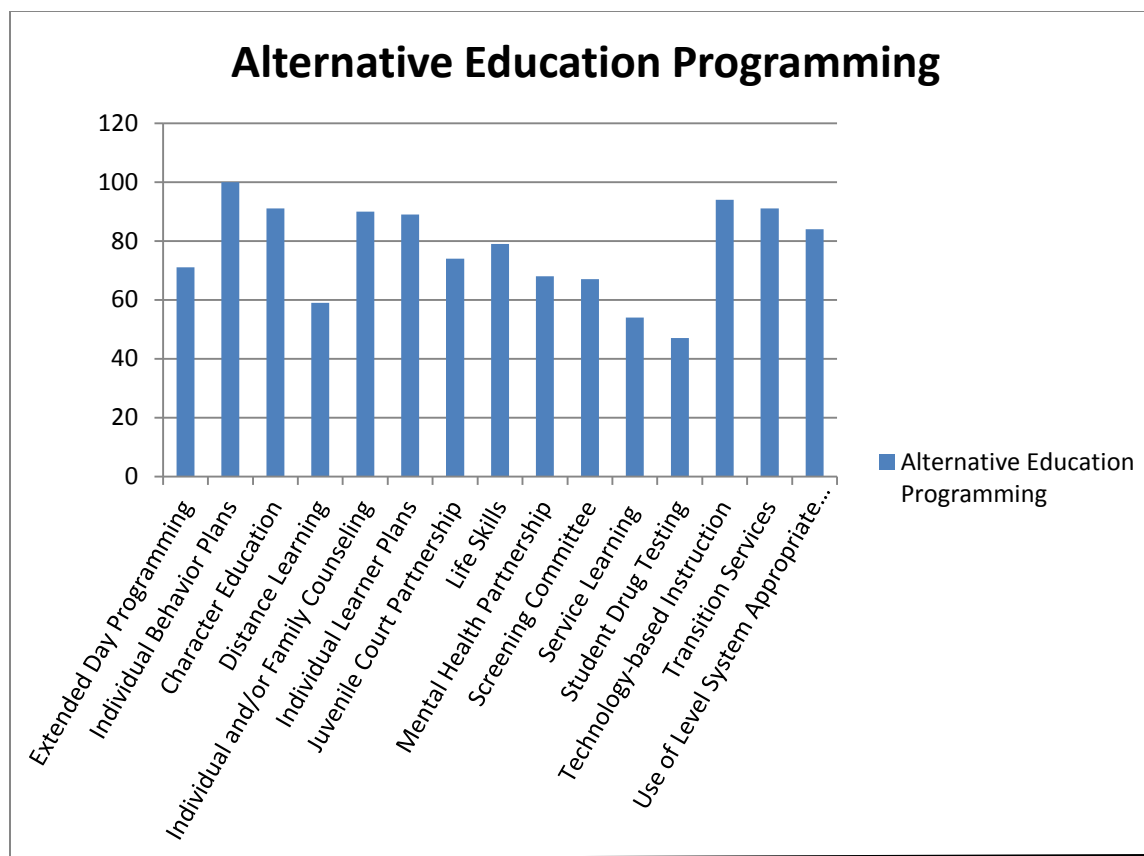


Table 3: Alternative Education Programming

The survey to districts also indicated several things about the nature of alternative schools and programs across the state. Alternative education programs may be housed in a designated, separate, alternative school building that may or may not have a school number. Districts also report that alternative education programs may be self-contained within a traditional school. Moreover, alternative services may be geared toward students who have been suspended or expelled, as well as students that have dropped out of school and are reentering the education system. Even more interesting is that some alternative schools and programs have a mixture of the above elements making them a hybrid school serving various alternative programming purposes.

Educators were asked if they had established an alternative education advisory committee at the district level and 61 districts reported having an alternative education advisory committee this year. Districts were also asked the average length of placement (stay) in the alternative setting and the average was 62 days. Educators were also given an opportunity to discuss the general needs of their program(s) and/or school(s). Sample comments from districts may be found in Appendix F. Comments shed light on the vast needs of alternative education programs. However, there was one need most commonly cited. ***The majority of LEAs cited a need for earmark funding designated specifically for***

alternative education. Some recommend changing the current BEP funding to designate specific funding for alternative education.

Finally, a history of alternative education in Tennessee is included in the annual report. A brief history of alternative education is presented in Appendix D.

Alternative School Spotlight: Weakley County Alternative School

The Weakley County Alternative School is located in Dresden, Tennessee. It is a program that serves predominantly sixth through twelfth grade. There have been a few exceptions of fifth graders and one fourth graders.

Students are placed for a variety of reasons. Punitive placements include insubordination, which may range from insufficient academic effort to blatant disrespect toward others, alcohol violations, fighting, bullying, and truancy. Alcohol violations result in an automatic thirty school day remand. Zero tolerance offenses are reviewed on a case by case basis by the superintendent, his assistant and a board of administrators. Very often the suspension is amended to a placement at the alternative school.

The CASTLES program began as part of a grant to utilize community service for suspended and expelled students. The acronym stands for “Character and Success Through Learning Experiences in Service”. While the students no longer go into the community to serve, we still have the alternative to suspension in place. For up to ten days during a school year a student may come to the alternative program in lieu of being suspended out of school. This is a “win-win” for the school system, the juvenile court and parents. The student is not counted absent and is allowed to do their school work.

The third program is entirely non-punitive. It is known as FOCUS. This stands for “Finding Opportunities to Challenge Our Underachieving Students”. It has been beneficial for many students. Situations have ranged from pregnancy and teenaged parenthood, transition back into the mainstream from residential placements, providing remediation time for students who have fallen behind due to medical or other family issues and working with the Department of Children’s Services on various challenges.

Success stories include a young woman who was addicted to prescription medications. She would literally take anything she could find. Her father found marijuana in her bedroom and filed charges with the juvenile court. The director of the alternative program and the school social worker testified that she was going to die if steps were not taken to address the problem. The judge put her into state custody where she completed a rehabilitation program and earned her GED. She returned to the alternative school to thank the staff for their concern and action.

An ongoing situation is proving to be encouraging. A student who has fetal alcohol syndrome, was malnourished as an infant and abused as a toddler, has attended FOCUS since last August. She was prone to profane and violent outbursts. A medicine change, along with the patience and encouragement of the staff not only of the alternative program but the rest of the Adult Learning Center has resulted in more self-confidence and the cessation of the acting out

behaviors. If all goes well for the first six weeks of this school year she will return to her home school on a trial basis for in September.

The program is staffed by the director, Joyce Hale, who is a certified special education teacher and two highly qualified educational assistants. Mike Harrelson and Sakara Milan both hold bachelors degrees. All three, as well as the faculty of the Adult Learning Center, take pride in providing our students with the opportunity to learn to make better choices as they journey toward adulthood.

**Annual Alternative Education Report
(2011-2012 School Year)
APPENDICES**

Annual Alternative Education Survey (SY 2011-2012)

Appendix A

As Required by Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404



Alternative Education as defined by the Advisory Council for Alternative Education:

"A nontraditional academic program designed to meet the student's educational, behavioral and social needs."

Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3402 mandates "at least one (1) alternative school shall be established and available for students in grades seven through twelve (7-12) who have been suspended or expelled." **Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404** also requires that the Department of Education submit a report annually on the status of alternative education in Tennessee. In order to gain a better perspective, the following survey was developed. The information provided to the Department will be reported to the Governor, both education committees of the General Assembly, and the State Board of Education. Please complete the following survey and return it to the address listed below.

School System:	Date:
District Alternative Education Coordinator:	Email Address:
Phone Number: () -	Fax: () -
Address:	City and Zip Code:
Person Completing Report (if different from above):	Phone Number: () -

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL(S) OR PROGRAM(S) THAT OPERATED DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR:

(For each alternative school/ program, please identify the principal or program coordinator and provide an email address and phone number for each. Please do not include ISS.)

Alternative School/Program Name	Principal/ Program Coordinator	Email Address of Principal/ Program Coordinator	Phone Number for School/ Program
			() -
			() -
			() -
			() -
			() -
			() -
			() -

PARTICIPATION (TOTAL FOR ALL SCHOOL(S)/PROGRAM(S) IN YOUR DISTRICT):

Number of alternative school(s)* :	
Number of alternative education program(s)** :	
Total number of classroom(s) serving alternative education students:	
Total number of students served:	
District's total capacity (seats):	
Average length of placement (stay) in an alternative setting (number in days):	
Number of certificated staff working in an alternative school/program:	
Number of non-certificated staff assigned to an alternative education setting:	
Has an alternative education advisory committee been established at the district level?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

* A facility dedicated solely to alternative education

** An alternative education program or class within a school

Please return all forms no later than **June 30, 2012**, to:
James Vince Witty, Alternative Education Coordinator
710 James Robertson Parkway, 6th Floor AJT
Nashville, TN 37243

OR

FAX: (615) 532 - 6638

Please direct questions to James Vince Witty at
615-532-4768 or james.witty@tn.gov

PRIMARY REASON FOR STUDENT ASSIGNMENT (RANK 1, 2, 3, AND 4)

Zero tolerance offense	
Disruptive behavior	
Need for alternative education strategy	
Other (please describe in space given)	

SCHOOL/ PROGRAM ELEMENTS PRESENT IN YOUR DISTRICT (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

Afterschool or other extended day programming	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual behavior plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Credit recovery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distance learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dropout prevention strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual and/or family counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual learner plans	<input type="checkbox"/>
Juvenile court partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screening committee (for alternative education placements)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student drug testing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology-based instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition services (a formal plan)*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of level system or similar behavior support mechanism that encourages appropriate behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe in space given)	

***Mandated requirement under Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-3402**

SPECIAL GROUPS SERVING THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL/PROGRAM (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

ELL Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Counselors	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special Education Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Workers	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Resource Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe in space given)	

1. What models or curriculum are you currently implementing in your alternative education classroom(s)?
2. What technical assistance opportunities would help you as an alternative educator?
3. What is the greatest challenge facing your alternative education school(s)/programs(s)?
4. Additional comments/ feedback that would be appropriate for the alternative education report to the General Assembly?
5. Of the students served how many went on to graduate with a regular high school diploma during the current school year?
6. Do you see a growing need for alternatives at the elementary level? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Please return all forms no later than **June 30, 2012**, to:
 James Vince Witty, Alternative Education Coordinator
 710 James Robertson Parkway, 6th Floor AJT
 Nashville, TN 37243

OR

FAX: (615) 532 - 6638

Please direct questions to James Vince Witty at
 615-532-4768 or james.witty@tn.gov

Appendix B: District Alternative Education Coordinators

School System	Coordinator	E-mail	Phone
Alamo City	Not Required		
Alcoa City	Scott Porter	sporter@alcoaschools.net	865-982-4631
Anderson County	Sue Voskamp	svoskamp@acs.ac	(865) 463-2800
Athens City	Robert Owens	debityj@k12tn.net	(4233) 745-2443
Bedford County	Janice Womble	womblej@bedfordk12tn.net	(931) 684-3284
Bells City	Not Required	-	
Benton County	Randy Shannon	randy.shannon@tennk12.net	(731) 584-4492
Bledsoe County	Jack Roberson	jackroberson@k12tn.net	(423) 447-2914
Blount County	Jane Morton	jane.morton@blountk12.org	(865) 984-1212
Bradford SSD	Shane Paschall	paschalls2@k12tn.net	(731) 742-3152
Bradley County	Zoe Renfro	zrenfro@bradleyschools.org	(423) 473-8473
Bristol City	Dr. Dixie Bowen	bowend@btcs.org	(423) 652-9225
Campbell County	Larry Nidiffer	nidifferl@k12tn.net	(423) 562-8377
Cannon County	Arlin Hale	arlin.hale@ccstn.com	(615) 563-2144 x 243
Carroll County	John McAdams	jmcadams@carrollschools.com	(731) 986-8908
Carter County	Danny McClain	dannymcclain@k12tn.net	(423) 547-4000
Cheatham County	Jo Jones	jonesj@cheatham.k12.tn.us	(615) 746-1424
Chester County	Bobby Helton	bheltonb2@tennk12.net	(731) 989-8144
Claiborne County	Travis Bailey	baileyt21@k12tn.net	(423) 526-9835
Clarksville-Montgomery County	David Turner	david.turner@cmcass.net	(931) 542-5057
Clay County	Steve Chitwood	chitwoods@k12tn.net	(931) 243-5516
Clinton City	Not Required	-	
Cleveland City	Larry Payne	lpayne@clevelandschools.org	(423) 347-2951
Cocke County	Bryan Douglas	douglasb@cc-boe.net	(423) 625-9768
Coffee County	Major Shelton	sheltonm@k12coffee.net	(931) 723-5189
Crockett County	Jared Foust	foustj@ccschools.net	(731) 696-2604
Cumberland County	Eddie Nunley	enunley@k12tn.net	(931) 456-1228
Dayton City	Mike Latham	lathammi@daytonCity.net	(423) 775-8414
Decatur County	Jeff Melton	jeff.melton@tennk12.net	(731) 847-6437
DeKalb County	Marshall Ferrell	ferrellm@k12tn.net	(615) 579-4059
Dickson County	Karen I. Willey	kwilley@dcbe.org	(615) 740-6070
Dyer County	See Dyersburg City	-	
Dyersburg City	Danny Walden	dwalden@k12tn.net	(731) 286-3600
Elizabethton City	Corey Gardenhour	gardenhourc@k12tn.net	(423) 547-8000
Etowah City	Cheryle Cooper	cooperc6@k12tn.net	(423) 263-5483
Fayette County	Terry Williams	terry.williams@k12tn.net	(901) 465-7100
Fayetteville City	Rickey Shelton	sheltonr@fcsboe.org	(931) 433-5542
Fentress County	Kaye O'Brien	kobrien@fentress.k12tn.net	(931) 879-5082
Franklin County	Diana Spaulding	diana.spaulding@fcstn.net	(931) 967-0626
Franklin SSD	Annie Sawyers	sawyersa@fssd.org	(615) 794-6624
Giles County	Susan Boyd	sboyd@giles.k12.tn.us	(931) 424-7022
Grainger County	Keith Lamb	klamb1@k12tn.net	(865) 828-3611

Greene County	Angelo Botta	bottaa@greeneK12.org	(423) 798-2646
Greeneville City	Jeff Townsley	townsleyj@gcschools.net	(423) 787-8009
Grundy County	Judy Fults	jfults@k12tn.net	(931) 692-5427
Hamblen County	Tami Tasker	ttasker@hcboe.net	(423) 585-3785
Hamilton County	Rodney Knox	knox_rodney@hcdoe.org	(423) 983-3520
Hancock County	Tony Seal	tseal2@k12tn.net	(423) 733-4848
Hardeman County	Steve Gibson	gibsons4@k12tn.net	(731) 658-2510
Hardin County	Charles Patton	pattonc5@k12tn.net	(731) 925-3940
Hawkins County	Gloria Silvers	silversg@hck12.net	(423) 272-7629
Haywood County	Mary Hood	hood@k12tn.net	(731) 772-9613
Henderson County	David Weatherford	weatherford@k12tn.net	(731) 967-9527
Henry County	Michael Poteete	poteetem@k12tn.net	(731) 642-7500
Hickman County	Greg McCord	mccordg@hickman.k12tn.net	(931) 729-3391 ext 2251
Hollow Rock-Bruceton	See Carroll County	-	
Houston County	Cathy Harvey	harveyc@k12tn.net	(931) 289-4748
Humboldt City	Ann Williams	ann.williams@humboldtschools.com	(731) 784-2652
Humphreys County	Daniel Moran	morand@hcss.org	(931) 296-2568
Huntingdon SSD	Steve Peery	perrys@k12tn.net	(731) 986-2222
Jackson County	Johnny McLerron	mclerronj1@k12tn.net	(931) 268-6762
Jackson-Madison County	Portia Hegman	pjhegmon@jmcss.org	(731) 664-2534
Jefferson County	Mandy Schneitman	schneitmanm@k12tn.net	(865) 397-3194
Johnson City	Janie Snyder	snyderj@jcschools.org	(423) 434-5585
Johnson County	Lisa Arnold	arnoldl@k12tn.net	(423) 727-2620
Kingsport City	Carolyn Kennedy	ckennedy@k12k.com	(423) 378-2185
Knox County	Brian Hartsell	mencerw1@k12tn.net	(865) 594-1614
Lake County	Bret Johnson	johnsonb11@k12tn.us	(731) 253-6601
Lauderdale County	Shirley Robinson	srobinson@lced.net	(731) 635-4821
Lawrence County	Mickey Dunn	mdunn@lcass.us	(931) 762-3581
Lebanon SSD	Beth Goolesby	goolesbyb@k12tn.net	(615) 453-2694 ext 25
Lenoir City	Janet McGee	jmcgee@lenoircityschools.com	(865) 986-2072
Lewis County	Dean Heady	dean.heady@tennk12.net	(931) 796-3264
Lexington City	James McAdams	mcadamsj3@caywood.org	(731) 967-5591
Lincoln County	Linda Tallman	ltallman@lcdoe.org	(931) 433-3565
Loudon County	Tom Hankinson	hankinsont@loudoncounty.org	(865) 986-2036
Macon County	Charles Biles	bilesc1@k12tn.net	(615) 666-2125
Manchester City	Deborah Williams	dwilliams2@k12tn.net	(931) 728-2316
Marion County	Toby Wilson-White	twilson@mctns.net	(423) 942-0945
Marshall County	Lisa Ventura	ventural@k12tn.net	(931) 359-1581
Maryville City	Dr. Sandra Earnest	sandie.earnest@maryville-	(865) 982-7121
Maury County	Robert Busch	buschr@k12tn.net	(931) 381-1474
McKenzie SSD	See Carroll County	-	
McMinn County	Vant Hardaway	hardawayv1@k12tn.net	(423) 744-1658
McNairy County	Stephanie Brown	browns@mcnairy.org	(731) 645-9366
Meigs County	David Brown	david@meigsboe.net	(423) 334-5793
Memphis City	Dr. Joris Ray	rayjorism@mcsk12.net	(901) 416-2200
Metro/Nashville Public	Tony Majors	tony.majors@mnps.org	(615) 259-8772
Milan SSD	Marilyn Goodman	goodmanm@milanssd.org	(731) 686-0844

Monroe County	Tim Blakenship	tim@monroe.k12.tn.us	(423) 442-2373
Moore County	Jack Sisk	jackie.sisk@tennk12tn.net	(931) 759-7303
Morgan County	Ronnie Wilson	wilsonr@mcsmail.net	(423) 346-6214
Murfreesboro City	None Required	-	
Newport City	None Required		
Oak Ridge City	Sherrie Fairchild-	sfairchild-keys@ortn.edu	(865) 425-3155
Obion County	Cynthia Rainey	raineyc@k12tn.net	(731) 885-8466
Oneida SSD	Rachel Joiner	rjoiner@oneidaschools.org	(423) 569-8912
Overton County	Terry Melton	terry.douglas.melton@us.army.mil	(931) 823-9388
Paris SSD	Norma Gerrell	norma.gerrell@parissd.org	(731) 642-9322
Perry County	Gil Webb	webbg2@k12tn.net	(931) 589-2102
Pickett County	Randy Garrett	garrettr@k12tn.net	(931) 864-3123
Polk County	John Dixon	NONE PROVIDED	(423) 303-6215
Putnam County	Jeff Comer	comerj1@k12tn.net	(931) 526-9777
Rhea County	Dallas Smith	smithd@rheaCounty.org	(423) 775-7813
Richard City SSD	Beth Webb	bwebb@richardhardy.org	(423) 837-7282
Roane County	Chris Johnson	cbjohnson@roaneschools.com	(865) 882-3700
Robertson County	Donna Rae Dorris	donnarae.dorris@rcstn.net	(615) 384-5588
Rogersville City	Rhonda Winstead	winsteadr@rcschool.net	(423) 272-7651
Rutherford County	Don Odom	odomd@rcschools.net	(615) 893-5812
Scott County	Bill M. Hall	bill.hall@scottcounty.net	(423) 663-2159
Sequatchie County	Peg Robertson	probertson@sequatchie.k12.tn.us	(423) 949-3617
Sevier County	John Enloe	johnenloe@sevier.org	(865) 453-4671
Shelby County	Karen F. Ball	kball@scsk12.org	(901) 473-2679
Smith County	Carol Webster	websterc1@k12tn.net	(615) 735-9646
South Carroll SSD	See Carroll County	-	
Stewart County	Betty Boren	bettyboren@stewart.k12.tn.us	(931) 232-3109
Sullivan County	Elizabeth Sells	elizabeth.sells@sulivank12.net	(423) 354-1020
Sumner County	Norma Dam	norma.dam@sumnerschools.org	(615) 451-5423
Sweetwater City	John Ridgell	john.ridgell@scstn.net	(423) 337-4333
Tipton County	Daryl Walker	dwalker@tipton-county.com	(901) 475-5810
Trenton SSD	Steve Nunley	snunley@k12tn.net	(731) 855-1191
Trousdale County	Clint Satterfield	clintsatterfield@tcschools.org	(615) 374-2193
Tullahoma City	Wayland Long	longw@k12tn.net	(931) 454-2600
Unicoi County	Chris Bogart	bogartc@unicoischools.com	(423) 743-1611
Union City	Donnie Cox	coxd@k12tn.net	(731) 885-2373
Union County	Melissa Carter	carterm@ucps.org	(862) 992-7747
Van Buren County	Kurt Powers	powersk@k12tn.net	(931) 946-2442
Warren County	Diane Stanley	stanleyd2@k12tn.net	(931) 473-8723
Washington County	James Murphy	murphyj6@k12th.net	(423) 434-4910
Weakley County	Julia Rich	richj@k12tn.net	(731) 364-5481
West Carroll SSD	See Carroll County	-	
White County	David Copeland	david.copeland@tennk12.net	(931) 836-2229
Williamson County	John Tharp	johnt@wcs.edu	(615) 472-4000
Wilson County	Rick Miller	millerr@wcschools.com	(615) 453-3400

Local education agencies were asked to indicate any comments or feedback that they might have for the Tennessee General Assembly. Below are just a few sample comments from school districts. Comments shed light on the vast needs of those educators that teach in the alternative setting.

- **Carroll County Schools** notes that this program has worked extremely well partially because parents must bring students to register on the first day of attendance and parents are required to furnish transportation.
- **Henderson County Schools** reports that most of their students are placed for disruptive behavior, however, they have found that some students actually benefit from smaller classes.
- According to **Jackson-Madison County Schools**, the best teachers in any district should be placed in alternative programs. Students in alternative programs need the depth of knowledge and experience that these teachers bring into the classroom
- **Lawrence County Schools** identifies the desperate need for programs for elementary grade students, especially the emotionally disturbed.
- **McNairy County Schools** has seen an increasing number of students at the elementary level for disruptive and inappropriate behavior.
- **Milan SSD** is working toward a rehabilitation model, which means that they need more teachers, support staff, mental health professionals, and more technology.
- According to **Obion County Schools**, alternative school students are usually the truancy students and 16 and 17 year old freshmen. They reported the need to be able to fast track these students on credit recovery or graduate with fewer credits because they will not stay over 18 to graduate and will drop out.
- **Oneida SSD** requests attendance laws that incorporate flexible scheduling due to the fact that students living in poverty work to help support their families and/or miss school to watch over sick siblings or other family members. They reported that creating a flexible day would keep more students in school and give districts freedom to help individual student needs.
- **Sevier County Schools** identifies that the issues they are facing need to be addressed through more appropriate school-wide positive behavior programs and additional training for teachers and administrators.
- According to **Shelby County Schools**, there continues to be a growing need for elementary intervention.
- In **Sullivan County Schools**, the alternative program serving students who have committed zero tolerance offenses has enabled 17 and 18 year old students to graduate who otherwise probably would have dropped out of school.
- **Williamson County Schools** identifies the juvenile court connection as its' greatest asset for treating the whole child during a crisis period in their lives.

According to the Comptroller's report on alternative education titled *Tennessee's Alternative Schools*, one of the first alternative schools in our state originated in Dickson County in the late seventies (2005, p. 2). Former Juvenile Judge William D. Field, Sr. identified a true need for alternatives to students being expelled or suspended from school (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 2). In 1984, the General Assembly passed a bill authorizing the establishment of alternative schools for those who were continually having disciplinary problems in their traditional school environment (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 8). The legislature soon amended that bill in 1986 to *require* an alternative school for students in grades seven through twelve (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 8).

The Education Improvement Act (EIA) was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1992. This mandated that any school district serving students in grades seven through twelve have at least one alternative education program (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005 p. 3). The state legislature later authorized LEAs to create alternative programs for grades one through six. The General Assembly also passed legislation that prevented students from graduating from an alternative school (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 8).

In 1996, the General Assembly authorized the Department of Education to establish a pilot alternative school program, one in each grand division (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 8). The state legislature also mandated that the State Board of Education provide a curriculum for alternative schools focused on reforming students. In response, the Board released *Alternative School Program Standards* in 2000 (Comptroller of the Treasury, 2005, p. 8-9). In 2004, the Senate passed Joint Resolution 746 that required the Office of Education Accountability of the Comptroller's Office to conduct a study of alternative schools in Tennessee. That report was released in April of 2005.

More recently (2006), the General Assembly amended *Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3404* to require the establishment of an Advisory Council, referred to as the Governor's Advisory Council for Alternative Education. The Advisory Council is charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Consider any issue, problem or matter related to alternative education presented to it by the Governor, the Commissioner, or the State Board of Education, and give advice thereon.
2. Study proposed plans for alternative education programs or curricula to determine if the plans or curricula should be adopted.
3. Study alternative education programs or curricula implemented in Tennessee school systems to determine the effectiveness of the programs or curricula, and alternative education programs or curricula implemented in other states to determine if the programs or curricula should be adopted in Tennessee schools.
4. Consider rules of governance of alternative schools and make recommendations concerning rules of governance.
5. Make an annual report to the Governor, the education committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education on the status of alternative education in Tennessee.

In 2007, Public Chapter Number 517 mandated a transition plan for students entering and leaving an alternative education setting and establishes greater accountability measures to include monitoring academic and behavioral progress of students. Public Chapter Number 211 required that the Advisory Council for Alternative Education study issues relating to the establishment of pilot alternative school programs. Finally, Bill Public Chapter Number 455 required the Department of Education to create a pilot project for the 2007-2008 school year in Davidson County.

With the release of the first annual Alternative Education Report in January of 2008, the Council acknowledged the need to examine the following question, "What do we really mean by alternative education?" Due to the complexity of alternative education in our state, the Council proposed that the

State Board of Education adopt a much broader definition that encompassed all alternative education programs in Tennessee. The Council recommended that the Board adopt a new, more contemporary definition of alternative education. The Council proposed that the following definition of alternative education be adopted: ***“A nontraditional academic program designed to meet the student's educational, behavioral and social needs.”***

In August of 2008, the Governor’s Advisory Council for Alternative Education in conjunction with the State Board of Education released *Alternative Education Program Standards*. The model standards address the following broad categories: mission and environment, governance, transitional planning, support services, parent and community engagement, staffing and professional development, individualized learner plans, life skills, curriculum and instruction, student assessment, and monitoring and program assessment. The standards replaced the previously adopted *Alternative School Program Standards* from 2000.

In February of 2009, the Advisory Council released *A Feasibility Study Related to the Establishment of Alternative Programs in Tennessee* with specific recommendations on how to drive quality by enriching funds for alternative education. Additionally, in February of 2009, the Council hosted the first annual Student Discipline and Alternative Education Institute. Over three hundred educators attended the first Institute.

In October of 2009, the Council joined with the National Alternative Education Association (NAEA) on the first ever southeastern regional summit on alternative education. Partnering with the organization, and our friendly neighbors, this conference explored best practice, national trends, and allowed alternative educators an opportunity to collaborate with other practitioners outside of the state. The first summit was held in Rogers, Arkansas.

The Council also recently published (February of 2010) an executive brief entitled *Promoting High Quality Alternative Education: An Update from the Advisory Council*. In the brief the Council set forth several legislative recommendations/priorities which include the following: redefine alternative education, establish an *Exemplary Practices in Alternative Education Award*, investigate ways to enrich funding, and create a state-level position to support alternative teachers, students, and parents.

